

PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is an author's version which may differ from the publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/44950>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2017-12-06 and may be subject to change.

Will the real reflexive please stand up?

It is widely accepted in the study of reflexivity that there are two types of reflexive verbs: inherent and non-inherent verbs (Everaert 1986, Reinhart & Reuland 1993). An important distinction between the two types is productivity: non-inherent reflexive verbs can be formed from virtually any transitive verb, while inherent reflexive verbs can only be formed from a limited set of verbs. In many languages different strategies are employed to express the two types of reflexivity. In Dutch, for example, the pronoun *zich* (referred to as *SE-anaphor*) is used for inherent reflexive verbs (1a), while the pronoun *zichzelf* (referred to as *SELF-anaphor*) is used for non-inherent reflexive verbs (1b). Often, the non-inherent reflexive verbs have been called the *true reflexives*.

Another distinction between the two types is said to be the compositionality of their meanings (Grimshaw 1982, Wehrli 1986, Steinbach 2002, Dobrovie-Sorin 2005). According to this view inherent reflexive verbs historically started out as non-inherent reflexive verbs, a derivation of some transitive verb. Then, along the way, the verb acquired an idiomatic meaning for its reflexive use only, and consequently a new, obligatory reflexive verb entry was created in the lexicon. From the Dutch verb *schikken* ‘to arrange’, for example, a new verb *zich schikken* ‘to go along’ was created (2). Therefore, the conclusion would be that the difference between inherent and non-inherent reflexive verbs is that only inherent reflexive verbs evolved from a transitive verb into a separate verb entry.

A problem for this view are the so-called *grooming verbs*. Interestingly, grooming verbs involve verbs like *to wash*, which are often seen as the prototypical reflexives. Cross-linguistically these verbs pattern with both inherent and non-inherent reflexive verbs (Haspelmath 2003), cf. the Dutch grooming verb in (3) with (1a-b). A possible analysis is that these verbs have two forms, a transitive and an inherent reflexive form. However, even in the inherent reflexive form grooming verbs do not have an idiomatic meaning. This poses a problem for the view that inherent reflexive predicates are idiomatic. Because of this I will argue that inherent reflexive verbs are not by definition idiomatic expressions.

But if it is not the idiomatic meaning that distinguishes inherent reflexive verbs from non-inherent reflexive verbs, where does the distinction come from then? I will argue that the difference between the two types stems from a difference in argument structure (see Reinhart & Sioni 2004, 2005, de Alencar & Kelling 2005, Dobrovie-Sorin 2005, and Schäfer 2006 for discussion). In other words, inherent and non-inherent reflexive verbs differ from each other thematically. This analysis fits nicely with the other uses that SE-anaphors can have, (e.g. reciprocal, anticausative, middle and passive uses; see Kemmer 1993) which also differ thematically from non-inherent reflexive verbs. Moreover, I will use the analysis to shed some light on the nature of reflexivity.

Examples

- (1) a. Jan schaamt zich/*zichzelf
John shames SE SE.self
‘John is ashamed’
- b. Jan haat *zich/zichzelf
John hates SE SE.self
‘John hates himself’

(2) Stage 1: *schikken* ‘to arrange’ (transitive verb, optionally reflexive)

Stage 2: *schikken* ‘to arrange’ (transitive verb, optionally reflexive)
zich schikken ‘to go along’ (obligatory reflexive verb)

(3) Jan wast zich/zichzelf
John washes SE SE.self
‘John washes himself’

References

- de Alencar, Leonel F. & Carmen Kelling. (2005). “Are reflexive constructions transitive or intransitive? Evidence from German and Romance” in: Miriam Butt & Tracy Holloway King (Eds.) *Proceedings of the LFG05 Conference*.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen. (2005). “The SE-Anaphor and its Role in Argument Realization” in: Martin Everaert & Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, 118–179. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Everaert, Martin. (1986). *The Syntax of Reflexivization*. Foris, Dordrecht.
- Grimshaw, Jane. (1982). “On the Lexical Representation of Romance Reflexive Clitics” in: Joan Bresnan (ed.) *The Mental Representation of Grammatical Relations*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Haspelmath, Martin. (2003). “The geometry of grammatical meaning: Semantic maps and cross-linguistic comparison” in: Michael Tomasello (ed.) *The new psychology of language*, vol. 2, 211–242. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kemmer, Suzanne. (1993). *The middle voice*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Reinhart, Tanya & Eric Reuland. (1993). “Reflexivity” *Linguistic Inquiry* 24:657–720.
- Reinhart, Tanya, & Tal Sioni. (2004). “Against the unaccusative analysis of reflexives” in: Artemis Alexiadou, Elena Anagnostopoulou & Martin Everaert (eds.) *The unaccusativity puzzle*, 159–180. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reinhart, Tanya & Tal Sioni. (2005). “The Lexicon-Syntax parameter: reflexivization and other arity operations” *Linguistic Inquiry* 36: 389–436.
- Schäfer, Florian. (2006). “A mute Voice for the Middle” Ms., University of Stuttgart.
- Steinbach, Markus. (2002). *Middle Voice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Wehrli, Eric. (1986). “On some properties of French clitic *se*” in: Hagit Borer (ed.) *The grammar of pronominal clitics*, 263–283. New York: Academic Press.